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STAFF STUDY

Status of OBGI - State Department Relations

The overall impressions gained from a study of the OBGI-State relationship are that it works effectively and serves a useful function for both agencies. There are certain problems in the relationship, but usually these have stemmed from budgetary stringencies -- BALPA and OPRED in particular -- rather than from some impractical arrangement, inherent clash of personalities, or bad blood at the working levels. I would like to present, then, a short summary of these problems and my conclusions, based on my rather brief study of the situation, followed by a more detailed narrative describing the current state of the relationship.

Map Library

The problem is a vital one: State's inclination to greatly reduce its support for the Geographic Attache map procurement program. The only solution, if State persists on this course, is to continue to develop alternate means of collecting maps abroad. MLD already is utilizing competent OBGI officers for TDY collection trips. Steps to cover further contingencies are set forth in the FY 1975 Program Call.

NIS

Producing analysts in the DDI and in Commerce (Census) have reaffirmed the high value they place on Embassy review (and, to a lesser extent, on Departmental review) of their NIS draft manuscripts. The major problem lies in the uneven quality of this review. The NIS is assigned a low priority in the overall division of labor within State, and a given analyst's workload at the time he is asked to review a section can play as much of a role in its quality as the degree of expertise he may have in a country or particular discipline. For the most part, however, the State review, and especially that of the Mission, is conscientiously done and is an invaluable aid to the contributors, who would greatly regret any cutback in it.

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The procurement program directly supports State (as well as the other members of the Interagency Map and Publications Acquisition Committee) by making available, through the reference service, the maps acquired. The program provides indirect support through the maps produced, in Cartography Division of OBGI and elsewhere, on the basis of mapping data acquired by the Geographic Attaches. Thus the entire map procurement and servicing operations of OBGI and the State Department are thoroughly interrelated.

The only problem in the relationship, and it is a formidable and vital one, is the aforementioned reluctance on the part of management in State to continue providing funds and positions for the map procurement program, despite the fact that the Department and the Foreign Service constitute the second largest user of map materials, based on the number of requests levied on the Map Library Division. Steps proposed as solutions to cover various contingencies are set forth in OBGI's submission for the FY 1975 Program Call. It seems to me no practicable alternatives exist.

B. NIS Division

The State Department assists the NIS program by reviewing, both in the Field and at the Desk level, certain of the NIS manuscripts. At one time State/INR analysts (funded by CIA) actually wrote some 40% of the NIS sections, but in 1961 State divested itself of this function, while at the same time agreeing to provide a review of all political, sociological, and economic sections. As a result of cutbacks stemming from BALPA, on the one hand, and in the overall NIS program on the other, the scope of State's review has been reduced somewhat over the past 5 years.

State now receives the draft manuscripts of all Society, Government and Politics, Economy, and Science sections of the General Survey. Copies of each of these drafts are automatically given to the appropriate INR and Desk officers for review and comments, but in the case of Field review a selective process is followed. The Country Director determines, on the basis of certain criteria such as the current workload of the relevant Mission and the availability of information adequate for effective review in Washington, whether or not to send out a particular draft. In addition, if a draft section is to be sent to the Field, the Country Director decides

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whether the Mission is to be instructed to undertake an overall, "broadbrush" review or to comment on the manuscript if and as it sees fit ("optional" review). The Mission usually is given 4-6 weeks to report its comments back to the Department.

In the 4 1/2 years since BALPA I, approximately seven of every eight drafts received by State have been forwarded to the Field -- 40% for "broadbrush" review and 60% for "optional". Some 70% of those sent under the "optional" category have indeed been reviewed and commented on. Furthermore, the percentage of manuscripts not sent to the Field has steadily declined (from over 25% in the last half of 1968 to just over 10% in 1972). Attachment C gives a yearly breakdown of statistics on Field review.

The Field review is generally considered by the producing analysts to be the most valuable appraisal the NIS drafts receive. The Mission frequently provides relevant, previously unreported information, filling in gaps and sometimes correcting faulty interpretations which had been arrived at partly because of such reporting deficiencies. The INR review is also valued -- but not as highly as that of the Mission, as it is generally felt that the analysts in INR are basing their judgments on the same intelligence documents that are available to the original author. As for the Desk review, its special virtue is that it insures safeguarding of the official policy position of the U.S. Government on foreign issues. OER analysts tend to assign a lower value to Departmental review of the Economy drafts, as they feel that since many of the officers in INR and on the Desk are oriented politically and may have had little training in economics, their review often is skimpy and at times useless.

The major problem in the NIS-State relationship lies in the uneven, varied treatment which an individual NIS draft receives in State. In INR, for example, there have recently been sizable reductions in the number of slots, with the result that greater burdens are placed on the remaining officers. When an NIS draft comes in, it is given to the appropriate analyst with the understanding that he is to work on it if and when he can. Thus the relatively low priority assigned to the NIS in the division of labor means widely varying results in the reviewing process -- depending among other things on the degree of expertise an analyst has in a given country (he may be responsible for a half dozen or so) and on the amount of time he feels he is able to devote to the manuscript. Occasionally the INR or Desk analyst will make no comment, citing as an excuse the pressure of other work, and will defer to the judgment of the Mission. To sum up,

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very few analysts in State are against the NIS per se, and all want to see a basic intelligence document be as correct as possible when published, but the aforementioned variables of workload and expertise necessarily result in uneven quality of review overall.

Another problem, though more minor than the preceding, is the fact that a given Mission occasionally will return its comments after the date requested by the Department, thus causing a delay in OBGI's processing of that section. This delay becomes particularly troublesome in those instances when a draft has been sent out for optional review, as the NIS editors and the producing analysts have no way of knowing whether the Mission is indeed going to exercise its option. There have been instances where optional comments have arrived after the survey has been Xeroxed for final review by the participating offices. A simple remedy for this inconvenience, but one which would be of great benefit to all concerned, would be for State to add a sentence to its telegram of instructions (accompanying drafts being sent for optional review) asking each Mission to notify the Department if it does not plan to comment.

The Office of The Geographer at State furnishes data on land area, length of land boundaries, and limits of territorial waters to the NIS Division for incorporation in the Basic Intelligence Factbook. Missions in the field may, if they wish, send comments and suggestions concerning the published Factbook to the NIS Coordinator in INR, who forwards them to NIS Division. These comments, which are sent to the Department in the form of airgrams, operation memorandums, and informal letters, are generally useful and constructive, and in some cases update not only the Factbook but the analyst's files as well. Thus, most of the feedback (some 25 separate communications every 6 months, or from about 10% of the total number of Missions receiving Factbooks) serves as an effective review of Factbook content.

An even more effective review, of course, would be for each Mission to be given the option of reviewing a draft page dealing with its particular country, prior to publication. This might be construed as an extra burden on reduced Mission staffs. Nevertheless, I feel the idea should be explored with State.

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